

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 and 13-19 are pending in the present application. Claim 12 has been cancelled. Claims 5, 13-15, and 18 have been amended. Claims 1, 13, and 15 are independent claims. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-4 and 6-11 have been allowed. Further, the Examiner indicated that the subject matter of claims 13 and 15-19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Although not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, claims 13, 15, and 18 have been rewritten in independent form and, thus, are now in condition for allowance.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 5, 12, and 14 stand rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,319,497 to Wakabayashi et al. (hereafter "Wakabayashi") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,044,048 to Oinoue et al. (hereafter "Oinoue"). This rejection has been rendered moot by the following amendments.

Claim 12 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter therein. Thus, the rejection of claim 12 has been rendered moot.

Furthermore, claims 5 and 14 have been amended to be dependent on allowed claims. Specifically, amended claim 5 depends on claim 1, which was allowed by the Examiner. Amended claim 14 now depends on claim 13, which was amended into independent form. Since the Examiner previously indicated that claim 13 contains allowable subject matter, it is respectfully submitted that claims 13 and 14 are now in condition for allowance.

Neither the cancellation of claim 12, nor the amendments to claims 5 and 14, should be deemed a concession by Applicants as to the validity of this rejection. These amendments were made merely in an effort to expedite prosecution in the present application.

Conclusion

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but to merely show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

This Amendment After Final should be entered in that it is a full and complete response to the outstanding Office Action. All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly accommodated or rendered moot. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections and issue a Notice of Allowance in the present application.

Should the Examiner believe that any outstanding matters remain in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Jason W. Rhodes (Reg. No. 47,305) at the telephone number of the undersigned to discuss the present application in an effort to expedite prosecution.

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Amendment dated September 19, 2006
After Final Office Action of June 20, 2006


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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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